



March 27, 2023

The Honorable Denis R. McDonough  
Secretary of Veterans Affairs  
810 Vermont Ave NW  
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary McDonough,

We write to express our concerns regarding the recent VA Office of Inspector General (OIG) report that found VA North Texas Health Care System staff placed veterans on a months-long waiting list rather than offering community care referrals required by Veterans Health Administration (VHA) policy.<sup>1</sup> As Texans, we want to ensure that every veteran in our state is able to easily access all the health care options available to them under law.

Veterans, especially those seeking mental health care, should be able to receive quality care as quickly as possible, whether it is at a VA facility or in the community. Delays can have catastrophic impacts on veterans' mental and physical health. The VA MISSION Act, the Veterans Community Care Program (VCCP) rule, and subsequent VHA Directives, were important steps to allow veterans to receive care in the community if they cannot at the VA due to long distances, wait times, or if it is in their best medical interest. These directives are only effective if VHA staff adhere to the VCCP rule and other policies, and properly inform veterans of all their health care choices.

VHA requires staff to screen veterans seeking a mental health residential rehabilitation treatment facility program (MH RRTP) for admission within seven business days and provide them with a tentative admission date. If VHA staff expects the MH RRTP admission wait time to be greater than 30 calendar days, they must offer that veteran a community residential care program referral. Unfortunately, as the January 31, 2023, VA OIG report found, VA North Texas staff failed to offer these referrals and even denied veterans' requests for community residential care for most of fiscal years 2020 and 2021.<sup>2</sup> This is unacceptable for veterans to be treated this way and have their critical mental health care treatment delayed.

We are glad to see that the Under Secretary for Health, Veterans Integrated Service Network, and Facility Directors largely agreed with the OIG's five recommendations. To ensure VA has made the proper corrective actions on time and does not make similar mistakes in the future, we request a comprehensive update on VA's effort to implement the OIG's recommendations as soon as

---

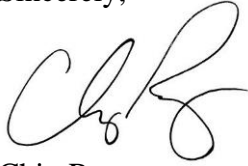
<sup>1</sup> [Noncompliance with Community Care Referrals for Substance Abuse Residential Treatment at the VA North Texas Health Care System | Oversight.gov](#)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

possible, which should include the status of each targeted completion date and specific actions taken.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

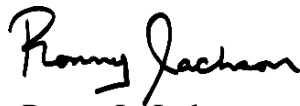
Sincerely,



Chip Roy  
Member of Congress



Lance Gooden  
Member of Congress



Ronny L. Jackson  
Member of Congress



Jodey C. Arrington  
Member of Congress



Pete Sessions  
Member of Congress



Morgan Luttrell  
Member of Congress



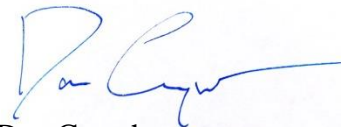
August Pfluger  
Member of Congress



Michael Burgess, M.D.  
Member of Congress



Pat Fallon  
Member of Congress



Dan Crenshaw  
Member of Congress



Roger Williams  
Member of Congress

Cc:

Shereef Elnahal, M.D., M.B.A  
Under Secretary for Health

Stephen R. Holt, M.D., M.P.H., M.S.N.R.S  
Executive Medical Center Director  
VA North Texas Health Care

Wendell Jones, M.D., M.B.A  
Network Director  
VISN 17